

Since no accidents were reported while following a wounded panther in this novel way, it would certainly appear to be a very safe method of following up wounded carnivora.

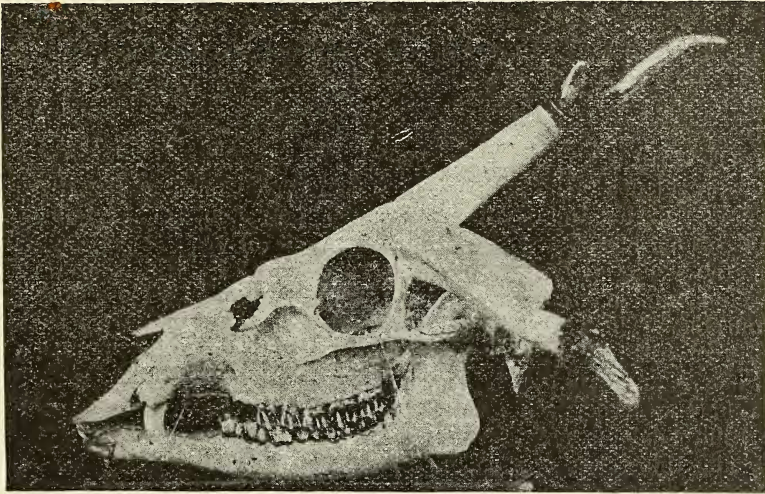
BANERA P.O.
RAJASTHAN.
August 19, 1955.

K. GUMAN SINGH,
Colonel, I.A.

8. MALFORMED MUNTJAC HEAD

(With a photo)

In connection with my recent reference to an abnormal Sambar antler another abnormal deer skull has come into my possession. In this case the skull is that of a Barking Deer—*Muntiacus muntjak*: Malay—Kijang.



This deer was shot on licence during the past open season and is of a fully mature male. It was in excellent condition.

The abnormality is in the left pedicel which, instead of growing upright has grown downwards and backwards past the left ear. This abnormal pedicel measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the angle of the skull above the eye socket, and the horn from the burr only $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The horn is very worn and stubby.

At the base of the abnormal pedicel, where it joins the front of the skull, there are two projections. One is half an inch long and the other, slightly above the first, is merely a small knob of bone. There are no signs at all of damage or injury to the abnormal pedicel or the bone structure at the base and the small projections appear to be projections from straight clear skull bone.

The normal pedicel measures from the base at the back $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the horn from the burr $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

In view of the absence of damage to the pedicel and the bone tissue in that region it would seem that this abnormality was present before the animal was born and that the projections on the skull near the base of the abnormal pedicel are the indications of one—if not two, additional pedicels which failed to form.

HQ. GAME DEPARTMENT,
FEDERATION OF MALAYA,
SEREMBAN,
NEGRI SEMBILAN,
MALAYA.

H. J. KITCHENER, F.Z.S.

May 25, 1955.

9. THE STATUS OF THE NILGIRI TAHR OR 'IBEX' (*HEMITRAGUS HYLOCRIUS* BLYTH)

As a result of letters appearing in the Press to the effect that Nilgiri Ibex in these hills were on the verge of extinction owing to poaching and indiscriminate shooting, it was decided to hold a census of these animals in order to ascertain the exact position. An attempt to carry this out in May 1954 had to be abandoned owing to the unusual prevalence of horse-flies which had driven most of the Ibex into the *sholas* during the daytime, and to the persistent rain and low-lying cloud. The census was therefore deferred till April 1955, by which time the young grass on burnt areas would bring the Ibex up from the cliffs, and it was hoped that other conditions would prove more favourable. The result was most satisfactory.

Along the great 20-mile sweep of the cliffs from Nilgiri Peak to Sispara and Ankinmalai no less than 296 Ibex were counted in 17 different herds, while an outlying herd of 42 was enumerated in the Billithadahalla area. The grand total actually seen was therefore 338, and this takes no account of others which may have been overlooked or were out of sight down the cliffs. The figure given may be accepted as accurate, since great care was taken to ensure that no herd was counted twice over. This was not difficult as the lure of the fresh grass kept the animals located. The result of this census shows how far from the truth is the idea that Ibex on the Nilgiris are on the verge of extinction.

Only in the small isolated Glenmorgan area on the northern side not a single animal could be found, nor any droppings, and it would appear that this herd, which in 1947 numbered some 30 head, has been wiped out by poachers, in spite of the fact that the area has been closed to Ibex shooting for some 20 years. Elsewhere, on the main Ibex grounds between Nilgiri Peak and Bangi Tappal, poaching is mostly confined to gangs of Estate workers armed with spears and accompanied by packs of dogs. It will be appreciated how difficult it is for an unarmed Watcher or Forest Guard to deal with these, though the presence of sportsmen does act as some deterrent. Licence